

Earth-Friendly Gardening & Landscaping



Indoor plants for hanging around

Indoor hanging plants seem to come and go in style. Unfortunately, many people lose interest in them because they become bored with little more than green fronds hanging over their heads. But hanging plants can offer a great deal more, depending on how they are selected.

A hanging plant does not simply mean Boston ferns, Swedish ivy, and spider plants, although these are remarkably easy to grow. There are some foliage plants which sport colorful stripes and veins, while others offer weird and intriguing leaf shapes. There are also a great many flowering plants ideal for indoor hanging baskets, each suited to different levels of light exposure, as well as temperature and humidity ranges.

In fact, it is possible to find an indoor hanging plant for every conceivable situation. The trick is actually reading plant labels before bringing a plant home and also doing some quick horticultural research before visiting a reliable garden center.

Some basic concerns for hanging plants involve just how you plan to hang them. Nothing is less appealing than simply dangling an inexpensive plastic pot from a hook in the ceiling. Instead, consider grouping three or five containers of various sizes together in an open, well-lit area and hanging them at different

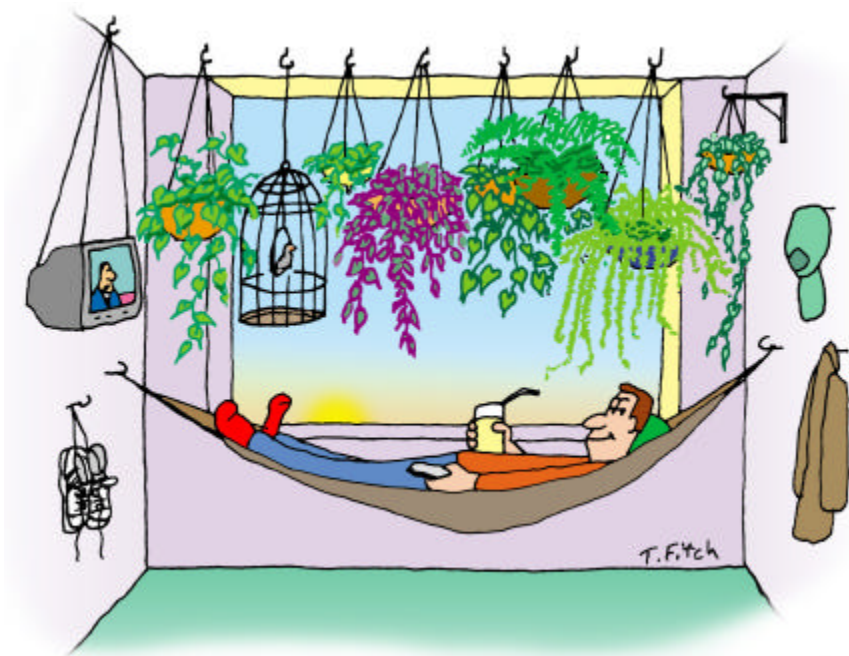
levels. Your arrangement will create a sense of both height and depth. While determining the height at which you will suspend the plants, keep in mind that you will want ready access to the plants for ongoing care. Sometimes it is best to hang pots no higher than eye level, depending on the location.

Also, the container need not be the typical plastic pot and attached saucer. The saucers often overflow, creating a mess, and the pots are usually very cheap in appearance. You might want to set a plain pot with drainage holes inside a more decorative pot or container without

a drainage hole. You will avoid spills, and decorative containers can offer a broad range of textures and styles, which will enhance the overall appearance of your plants.

It is often useful to set plants into a soil-less medium to reduce weight, rather than relying on a heavier standard potting mix. Some soil-free mixes are specifically made for hanging plants and help conserve moisture and enhance aeration for growing roots.

When it is time to water your plants, it is preferable to actually take the plant down and water it in a sink, at least on occasion. This



approach ensures complete drainage, and also allows you to inspect the plant more closely for pests while tending to damaged foliage, dead flowers, and other pruning chores. In addition, use this opportunity to thoroughly rinse off the foliage, removing potential pests and dust. In fact, removing dust actually increases the amount of light which can reach the leaf surface.

As for the plants, do not limit yourself to traditional selections.

Common asparagus ferns are all well and good, but why not a look a bit further for a special cultivar like Emerald fern (*Sprenger asparagus*)? And why settle for plain green foliage when there are hundreds of variegated plant species which will give you bursts of gold, cream, and brilliant yellow, such as the popular Goldfish plant (*Columnea microphylla*)? Or substitute variegated Swedish ivy (*Olecanthus coleoides* 'Marginatus') for its lackluster cousin. Other interesting foliage plants, like the large-leafed Fittonias, feature either deep red veins (Mosaic Plant), or brilliant silver veins (Silver Net Plant).

Of course, entering the world of colorful foliage requires special attention to light exposure. Always select the proper plant for the proper location. For example, not all plants thrive in direct sun. Two varieties of Arrowhead vine ('Emerald Gem' and 'White Butterfly') are among the most beautiful trailing plants readily available. Given moisture and shade, they will thrive for years. But place them in too much light and they will literally fade away and die.

Location is not just a matter of sunlight and shade, however. One of the most intriguing hanging sedums, Burro's Tail (*Sedum morganianum*), has leaves or "pads" which are easily dislodged through handling. Such plants are best kept out of reach of children, pets, and tall human heads.

Hanging plants can offer colorful flowers in addition to exotic foliage. Christmas and Thanksgiving cactus are perhaps among the most used flowering indoor plants, although many garden centers also offer knock-outs like Lipstick vine (*Aseschynanthus radicans*), which boasts profuse bright red tubular flowers, and Italian Bellflower (*Campanula isophylla*), an alpine perennial which does well in cooler indoor locations. One of the most unusual trailing plants is the Rat's-tail cactus (*Aporocactus flagelliformis*), an absolutely stunning cactus specimen with striking pink flowers. If you can recover from the unpalatable common name, you may find that this might be the only hanging plant you will ever need to impress friends and visitors.

Orchids, naturally, offer an amazing range of colors and growth habits, although they are a bit more temperamental than grape ivy. Devotees, nevertheless, will justifiably argue that the plants are worth all the extra care and attention. In fact, for sheer horticultural hubris, an upscale gardening concern offers an wrought-iron globe with built-in magnifier for displaying and viewing one's prized specimen.

On a more mundane level, bright kitchen windows provide an ideal environment for garden herbs. Culinary favorites like parsley, chives, and rosemary can do extremely well indoors, whether grown together as a miniature hanging garden or planted and cultivated separately.

The most important step you can take with hanging plants begins with selecting species most suited to your environment, including light, temperature, and humidity. But you should also select plants based on your personality. Choose something exotic, fun and different, if you enjoy caring for and exhibiting plants. If not, you can still add color and life to your living space by referring to the following list of dependable, time-proven favorites.

Reliable Hanging Plant Species

Asparagus fern
Basket begonia (*Begonia tuberhybrida pendula*)
Baby's tears (*Soleirolia soleirolia*)
Christmas/Thanksgiving cactus
Creeping fig (*Ficus pumila*)
Devil's Ivy (*Epipremnum pinnatum*)
Ferns (numerous species)
Grape ivy (*Cissus rhombifolia*)
Hoya (Wax plant)
Ivy species
Kalanchoe
Lipstick vine (*Aeschynanthus pulcher*)
Philodendron species
Pothos species
Rosary vine or Hearts Entangled (*Ceropegia woodii*)
Spider plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*)
Swedish ivy (*Plectranthus oertendahlii*)
Wandering Jew



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